

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000077

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR CGURNEY
PARIS FOR CNEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/13/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MDC MAYOR OF HARARE SPENDS TWO DAYS IN JAIL

REF: A) 1/11/03 BELLAMY-HARRINGTON TELCON B) HARARE 42

Classified By: political section chief Matt Harrington. Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

[11.](#) (U) Action request -- see para 5.

[12.](#) (C) Mayor of Harare Elias Mudzuri was released from detention on January 13 after spending two nights in jail. He was arrested on January 11 along with his deputy mayor and several city councillors during a meeting with constituents in the Harare high density suburb of Mabvuku. Although no formal charges were filed, a police spokesman told journalists that Mudzuri had violated the draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA) by not seeking advance permission to hold the meeting. After Mudzuri's attorney -- Beatrice Mtetwa -- was denied access to her client most of January 12, she was able to obtain a High Court order late that day instructing police to produce Mudzuri in court and make clear the charges against him. In the morning of January 13, Mudzuri appeared before High Court Judge Benjamin Paradza, who ordered Mudzuri's immediate release, saying he appeared to have no case to answer. A police request that Mudzuri be kept under detention while investigations continued apparently fell on deaf ears.

[13.](#) (U) As reported ref B, Mudzuri is one of five mayors representing the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). After he began making noticeable improvements to Harare's roads and other infrastructure shortly after his election in March 2002 by an overwhelming majority, the Government of Zimbabwe launched a smear campaign to discredit him with unsubstantiated accusations of corruption and incompetence. In addition, the Government appointed a special commission to "help" Mudzuri devise a revitalization plan for Harare and -- in a move widely seen as an effort to hinder the ability of MDC office-holders to govern -- recently announced its intention to create governorships for Harare and Bulawayo, both of which are controlled by the MDC.

[14.](#) (C) Comment: Arresting an elected official for meeting with his constituents is absurd, but it constitutes only the latest move in a comprehensive Government campaign to harass and discredit one of the opposition's most visible officeholders. Mudzuri had held a series of recent meetings with Harare taxpayers to discuss the range of challenges facing the city, including water shortages, and the GOZ appears to have grown nervous about allowing him a forum for addressing large groups of disgruntled Zimbabweans or for correcting GOZ-disseminated attacks on the Mayor in the state media. This latest move suggests that the GOZ is increasingly willing to abandon even the pretence of respect for genuine democratic norms.

[15.](#) (U) Action requested: Per ref A, we believe that Mudzuri's arrest warrants strong criticism from the Department, perhaps in a statement expressing outrage at the Government of Zimbabwe's jettisoning of even the appearance of democratic governance.

SULLIVAN